**Summit on Creativity and Aging: A Pre-Conference to the
White House Conference on Aging**

The arts have a unique capacity for enhancing health, well-being, and engagement in our older years, and have been shown to have a positive impact on health and cognitive function. At the same time, more and more people want to grow old in their homes and communities, and need the support and infrastructure to do so. To address these issues on a national level, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) held a Summit on Creativity and Aging on May 18, 2015 to help develop recommendations for the 2015 White House Conference on Aging. The NEA and its partner, the National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA), assembled a group of experts to discuss the needs, barriers, and solutions for healthy aging through the arts and age-friendly community design. The summit brought together individuals from the fields of aging, the arts, and design to identify not only problems but also possible solutions to the looming crisis caused by the rapidly-increasing number of individuals living well into their 90's and beyond.

The main challenges and barriers found included:
- A lack of awareness of the benefits of the arts for older adults (which include improved health, improved cognition, less medication use, fewer falls, and fewer doctor visits);
- A lack of robust research design and support for research on the impact of the arts on older adults; and
- A lack of response to the urgent crisis in the availability of affordable housing and other supports for older adults.

The viable solutions offered included:
- Increase public- and private-funded research on benefits of the arts and community design (to include cost-benefit analyses);
- Embed the arts across policy and research disciplines, including healthcare and the social sciences, as well as across the federal, state, and local government and the non-profit sector;
- Catalyze innovative public/private funding models for creative aging programs and community design; and
- Ask federal agencies to develop creative financing tools for housing and transit for older adults.

**Main Summit Findings in Detail**

*1. What are the biggest issues/needs?*

**Lifelong Learning and Engagement in the Arts:**
- Cultural change, and a change in public perception
- Leadership to ensure equitable public policy
- Replicable business models that are adaptable and diverse
- Research to analyze results of lifelong learning

**Health and Wellness and the Arts:**
- Promoting awareness of arts programs that enhance health and wellness
- Developing a broad definition and array of existing innovative and novel study designs and outcome measures to support evidence-based research
- Identifying and promoting shared values and a common language among intergenerational stakeholders
- Promoting partnerships among artists, scientists, healthcare entities, policymakers, funders, etc.

**Age-Friendly Community Design:**
- Demographic shift which too many people are in denial about
- Designing a community that works for everyone
- Critical importance of transportation
- Age-friendly design at its best is efficient, effective, and equitable for all
- Design inclusivity

*2. What are the biggest barriers to addressing these needs?*

**Lifelong Learning and Engagement in the Arts:**
- Arts and Aging are not equal players at the "research table"
- No joint ownership or collaboration to build a coalition of advocates
- Institutions do not have an embedded commitment to lifelong learning

**Health and Wellness and the Arts:**
- Insufficient public interest and attention/understanding with inadequate communication between all stakeholders
- Lack of sufficient inclusion of the arts in public policy discussions
- Not enough effective theoretical models and research methods applicable to the arts
- Insufficient funding for artists and researchers

**Age-Friendly Community Design:**
- Communities need options on all issues (housing, transportation, health, etc.) but our systems tend to not have options
- Affordability and lack of supply in age friendly communities and gentrification
- Lack of vision and cost-benefit analysis/evaluations to make the case
- Need to bring all policies and models to scale at the national and local level

*3. What are the most viable solutions that the federal government can help with?*

**Lifelong Learning and Engagement in the Arts:**
- Actively work to eliminate ageism across all federal policies
- Catalyze increased public/private funding by convening funders and develop innovative funding models
- Collaborate across federal, state, and local governments to collect data, map the ecosystem, and leverage the potential of successful programs
- Promote and fund cost-effectiveness and outcomes research
- Increase funding to individual older artists and provide support for programs
- Support the role of professional and teaching artists

**Health and Wellness and the Arts:**
- Identify the critical agencies that can bring the arts into their own solutions
- Acknowledge and name the artistic contributions integral to other fields
- Expand the federal Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development with virtual mentoring and cross-sector mentorship
- Establish national arts and culture research network with best practice sharing (map out who funds what, and under what parameters)
- Integrate psychological and social sciences as allies in the arts and humanities
- Expand and infuse arts through existing systems at the federal, state, local and non-profit levels

**Age-Friendly Community Design:**
- Ask agencies to look at a series of issues relating to creative financing tools for housing and transit
- Fund innovations and research in federal agencies (DARPA, NSF, NEA, etc.)
- Appoint a White House spokesperson on aging
- Start a government-wide conversation on design as a key tool to create all-inclusive communities
- Start a federal campaign against ageism